

Welcome from the SRC Chair

Greetings everyone, and thank you for taking the time to read this year's State Rehabilitation Council report. By law, the SRC is the voice of the consumer, and members of the Council have traveled all over the state in the last 12 months attending meetings and talking to individuals receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services. And what we're hearing is cause for optimism.

We're hearing that people are getting the services they need and want. We're hearing that people have found high-quality jobs, and we're hearing that those jobs have helped shape their lives and the lives of their families.

This report not only reflects our travels across the state but also has empirical data about the populations the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency has served over the last year, and the demographics—like disabilities themselves—aren't limited to one population or another. In Fiscal Year 2016, GVRA has

helped men and women, old and young and individuals from a wide-range of races and ethnicities. The thing that unites them all is that they have a common goal: employment.

As I alluded to earlier, employment doesn't just mean that someone has a job. It means they have a chance to give themselves and their families the life they envisioned. It means they're contributing members of society, and it means that they're growing the economy.

I'm proud of our progress this year, and I'm even more excited for the potential that next year will bring. We have a great opportunity to set the standard for service for individuals with disabilities, and I'm optimistic Georgia can be a nationwide leader in this regards.

Best wishes, Kenneth Slade SRC Chair

A Letter from the GVRS Chair

As the Chairman of the Georgia Vocational Services Board, the success of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency is very important to me.

The numbers that follow in this report show a trend upwards from years past, and I believe they'll continue to climb as we move forward.

Our success is dependent on all the employees who work hard day in and day out to help individuals with disabilities find independence through employment. It's important, then, to remember it doesn't happen in a vacuum.

Teamwork is essential to what we do, and unexplored collaboration is the biggest

mistake we can make. That's why I'm so proud of the working relationship the GVRS Board has with both GVRA and the SRC among others.

We're all working towards the same goal, and if we work together, we'll accomplish so much.

I hope you find this report useful and illuminative. Our goal is to be as transparent as possible, and this report does much to accomplish this goal.

All the best, Jimmy DeFoor GVRS Board Chair

SRC Members and the Categories They Represent

Kenneth Slade, Chair — Business, Georgia State University

Peggy Venable, Vice Chair — American Indian VR Program

Sean Casey (Ex-Officio) — Director of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

Deanie Fincher — Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities

Deborah Gay — State Department of Education

Deborah A. Fields-Harris — Parent Training and Information Center

Deborah Lovell — Individuals with Visual Impairments

Christopher Moder — Business, University of Georgia

Brian Mosley — Individuals with Visual Impairments

Joy Norman — Individuals with Hearing Impairments

Steve Oldaker — Statewide Independent Living Council

Jennifer Page — Client Assistance Program

Mike Pryor — Community Rehabilitation Program, Goodwill of North Georgia

Lewis Wheaton — Business, Georgia Institute of Technology

Kayla Wilson — Former Vocational Rehabilitation Client

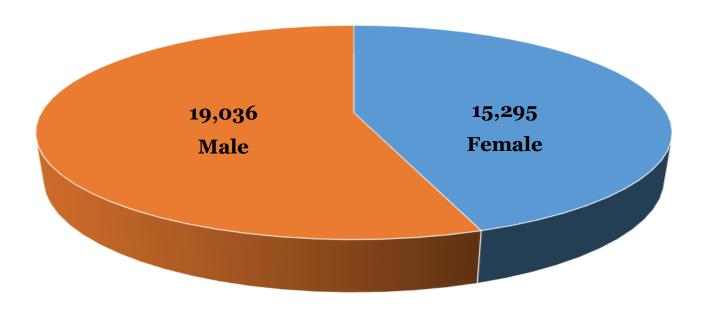


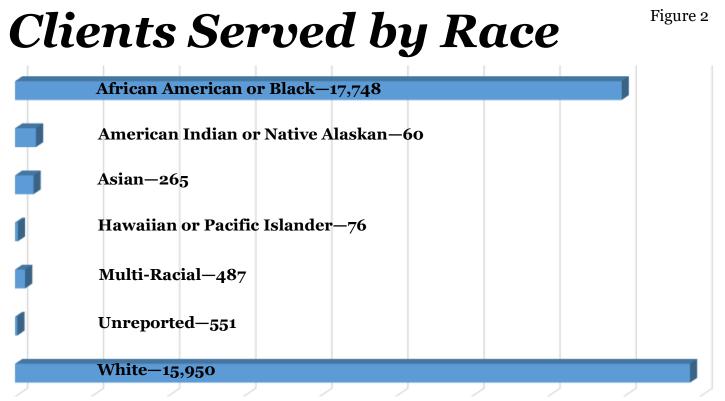
Clients Served by Gender

Note: All numbers were taken during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016, which ran from Oct. 1, 2015

to Sept. 30, 2016

Total Served: 35,137



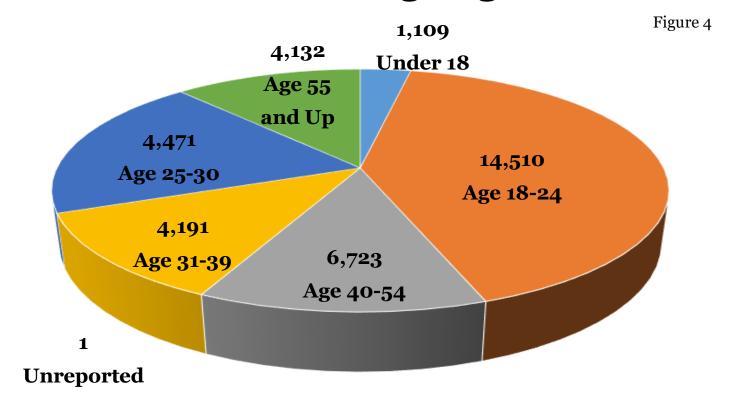


Clients Served by Disability

Figure 3

Primary Disability	Clients Served
Blindness	877
Both mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological	6//
Impairments	655
Cognitive Impairments (impairments involving learning, thinking, processing	
information and concentration)	10 107
information and concentration)	13,127
Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive)	341
Deaf-Blindness	41
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	193
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	720
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, weakness, pain, etc.)	,
General I hysical Debilitation (langue, weakness, pain, etc.)	1,153
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	810
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	162
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	429
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	1,629
No Impairment	157
Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease, hyperacusis, etc)	36
Other Orthopedic Impairments (limited range of motion)	677
Other Physical Impairments (not listed above)	1,643
Other Mental Impairment	
Other Mental IIIIpan illent	1,404

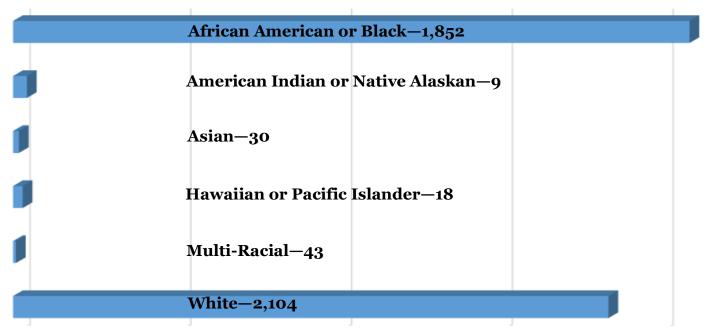
Clients Served by Age



Outcomes by Race

Figure 5 **Total Closures—4,056**

Note: Outcomes are defined here as those clients who have been employed for at least 90 days.



Earnings by Disability

Figure 6

Primary Disability	Outcomes	Average Weekly Earnings
Cognitive Impairments (impairments involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentration)	1,728	\$311
Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal and behavioral impairments, difficulty coping)	978	\$327
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	212	\$453
Other Mental Impairments	157	\$298
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	150	\$383
Other Physical Impairments (not listed above)	143	\$311
Blindness	113	\$355
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	102	\$305
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, weakness, pain, etc.)	96	\$355
Other Visual Impairments	73	\$416
Other Orthopedic Impairments (e.g., limited range of motion) Both mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological	68	\$354
Impairments	61	\$424
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	42	\$367
Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive)	36	\$317
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	36	\$388
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	30	\$412
Respiratory Impairments	21	\$480
Deaf-Blindness Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease,	5	\$470
hyperacusis, etc)	5	\$553
Total Outcomes/Average Weekly Earnings	4,056	\$334

SRC Welcomes New Executive Director



At the state Capitol on Oct. 24, Governor Nathan Deal swore in Sean Casey as Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency's (GVRA) Executive Director. SRC Chair Kenneth Slade and SRC Liaison Dana Skelton-Sanders were on hand for the swearing in. Mr. Casey will lead the agency in its mission to serve individuals with disabilities on the path to career success and greater independence.

An experienced public servant committed to all Georgians, Mr. Casey previously held a role as the Department of Administrative Service's Assistant Commissioner of Government Affairs. He has also served as the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Revenue and previously worked in Governor Deal's Office and the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. He expressed his excitement over a new chapter.

"I am honored and humbled at the opportunity to join the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency team," Mr. Casey said. "It is a true privilege to work at an agency that strives for inclusion and embraces the belief that everyone is able. I am excited to work alongside so many dedicated people as we

support Georgians in achieving their career goals."

Mr. Casey's service on behalf of GVRA extends back to 2012, when he led a team that worked to pass legislation making the agency independent of the Georgia Department of Labor. Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRS) Board Chairman Jimmy DeFoor said, "Annette Bowling, Tom Wilson and I were thrilled to have his leadership as we worked together four years ago to launch a client-focused agency. In Sean, GVRA has a person of great vision and integrity. He is fully committed to disability issues and will be an advocate who looks for innovative strategies to provide excellent customer service to all."

GVRA was formed by an act of the Georgia General Assembly, legislation that Mr. Casey played a large role in crafting. As the state's vocational rehabilitation agency, it operates more than 40 local offices statewide as well as the Business Enterprise Program, Disability Adjudication Services, Georgia Industries for the Blind, Roosevelt Warm Springs and Cave Spring Center.



SRC Hosts Public Hearings



The SRC in collaboration with GVRA hosted a series of public comment hearings statewide on the proposed GVRA policy revisions regarding Order of Selection and other notable changes.

The hearings were strategically held at accessible locations across the state to optimize the opportunities the public had to hear the information presented and give their collective feedback.

They were held in Atlanta, Rome, Savannah, Augusta and Columbus, drawing hundreds of attendees all together.

The comments given were captured and presented to the full SRC and GVRA Leadership.

Generally received as a great conversation between the SRC and the public at large, the meetings provided SRC members the chance to hear directly from the consumers that GVRA supports.

Though none have yet to be scheduled, the SRC will participate in more public hearings in the future.



A Success Story

How one man never gave up.

Marquise lane was referred to Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency services in 2012 with a documented disability of Cerebral Palsy. In high school, he received orthopedic accommodations due to limited range of motion in both upper and lower extremities and deficits in fine motor skills. Marquise was given accommodations with extended times on exams. He stayed focused in his studies, and he took the SAT test and scored a 1590, and on the ACT scored a 21. Very Impressive.

Marquise's goal was to attend the University Of Georgia (UGA) and major in Management Information Systems. His mom wanted him to attend Valdosta State University not because he could not do it, but because he had a support system in place.

Marquise mom serves in the USAF. Marquise did have others who tried to dissuade him from attending UGA saying it was too big, but Marquise was bound and determined to accomplish his goal.

Marquise was assessed by a Vocational Evaluator and was found to be an excellent candidate for post-secondary training in a four year college or university.

To prevent education failures, Marquise was advised to contact the Accessibility Office and meet with the Disability Coordinator, and shortly thereafter, he met with Dean Anderson. Mr. Anderson arranged the accommodations for Marquise including a dorm room on the first floor.

The Assistive Work Technologist assessed the Marquise and reported that Marquise would need assistive work technology devices such as an iPad with a foldable keyboard and Dragon speech recognition due to limited typing speed.

Marquise kept his Hope Scholarship for the entire four years at UGA.

In May of 2016, Marquise Graduated from UGA with a degree in Business Management Information systems. Marquise did not rest on his laurels however, and soon he met with his Counselor, Jennifer Gillard, Employment Consultant Thomas Simpson and Counselor Assistant Paula Phillips. Marquise's mom wanted to sit in on the meeting and was surprised that Marquise had a team of individuals assisting him with his next step in obtaining employment in his vocational field.

The counselor believed he could benefit from Community Work Adjustment Training since he had never worked before. The EC looked for training sites that would afford the client the opportunity to develop skills in his field.

The first training site Marquise interviewed with was not a good fit, but the EC already had a second training site waiting.

Marquise along with the EC and counselor met with the employers of Nexxtup, a local IT Support, Software Development and Web Design business. Marquise interviewed without assistance from both the EC and counselor.

The employers were very excited and immediately asked Marquise to start the following week. He received Assistive work technology assistance in his new job to ensure a smooth transition.

Marquise began his training in July and completed it in September of 2016. He was offered a position with the company at a salary of \$30,000 a year.

Marquise was receiving SSI Benefits but wanted to discontinue the assistance citing that he wanted to be independent and earn his own wages.

How Georgia's VR Process Works

From Start to Career

The vocational rehabilitation process begins when a client applies for VR services. An application is completed and an intake interview is provided to explore the individual's medical, social, financial, educational and vocational experiences.

In the preliminary assessment, the applicant's skills, abilities, talents and interests are explored. The Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) uses the assessment to understand the vocational needs of the client. When necessary, other assessments are done to determine any barriers to employment an individual is facing.

The outcomes of these assessments provide useful information in establishing services for a client.

After eligibility, the client and the VRC develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE). This plan outlines the objectives and services needed to aid the

client in reaching the vocational goal of their choice.

Each IPE is personalized to the needs of the client to assure the vocational goal is achievable and attainable. Working in partnership with the VRC, the client becomes knowledgeable about competitive employment choices.

Ultimately, the client decides on the specific type of competitive employment in a career of their choice. Follow up services are provided by Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure that the employment choice of the client is stable, secure and satisfactory to both the client and the employer.

Advocacy and support is available through the Client Assistance Program (CAP) throughout the VR process. In addition, clients are encouraged to reach out to GVRA Constituent Services should the need arise.



Eligibility Employment Success

Collaboration

How the SRC works with other boards around Georgia

Federal regulations require that the Georgia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) coordinate and establish working relationships with other state councils, particularly the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) of Georgia and the 9 regional Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

The SILC is a private nonprofit corporation governed by people with all types of disabilities from all across the state.

The role of the SILC is to identify societal barriers to independent living and to collaborate with Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Rehabilitation Services and other related entities to remove those barriers and to increase the supports and services needed to create independent living opportunities.

CILs are non-residential, community-based organizations, governed and staffed by people with disabilities, which offer a wide variety of services to consumers with disabilities and their families.

The foundation of these services is the peer-to-peer relationship, where people with disabilities act as mentors for other people with disabilities, showing them by example how to help themselves and to live independently.

The core services that CILs provide include but are not limited to individual advocacy and systems advocacy, peer counseling, information and referral, independent living skills training, and transition services.

Depending on the needs of the communities they serve, CILs may provide other services that vary from one center to another.

The SRC collaborates with the SILC and the CILs in a number of ways. The SILC Board

President, Steve Oldaker, serves on the SRC, and Brian Mosley, an Employment Skills Trainer at Walton Options Center for Independent Living in Augusta, also serves on the SRC.

Quarterly SRC meetings are held throughout the state and any nearby CIL is invited to attend each meeting and provide a briefing if they wish.

Steve Oldaker provides regular SILC updates at these SRC meetings and routinely updates the SILC on SRC activities.

In the summer of 2016, the SRC held six public hearings throughout the state to enable feedback on required changes to GVRA policy and procedures as a result of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) regulations.

The SRC worked closely with the CILs to arrange public hearing scheduling, locations, publicity and on-site facilitation resulting in substantial turnout and feedback from consumers.

The SRC mission is to collaborate with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency in planning and providing comprehensive and effective services that assist individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals and contribute to Georgia's economy.

The SILC mission is equal participation of people with disabilities within their communities.

The combination of these missions and the SRC's ongoing collaboration with the SILC and the CILs underscores our collective commitment to serving consumers with disabilities throughout our state.

Setting the Record Straight

Employers and the ADA: Myths and Facts

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a landmark federal law that protects the rights of people with disabilities by eliminating barriers to their participation in many aspects of living and working in America. In particular, the ADA prohibits covered employers from discriminating against people with disabilities in the full range of employment-related activities—from recruitment to advancement to pay and benefits.

The foundation for the ADA is America's promise of equal access to opportunity for all citizens.

Being inclusive of people with disabilities — in recruitment, retention, promotion, and in providing an accessible environment — gives businesses a competitive edge. Below are some of the common myths about how the ADA affects employers and research and facts that negate them.

Myth: The ADA forces employers to hire unqualified individuals with disabilities.

Fact: Applicants who are unqualified for a job cannot claim discrimination under the ADA. Under the ADA, to be protected from discrimination in hiring, an individual with a disability must be qualified, which means he or she must meet all requirements for a job and be able to perform its essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations.

Myth: When there are several qualified applicants for a job and one has a disability, the ADA requires the employer to hire that person.

Fact: An employer is always free to hire the applicant of its choosing as long as the decision is not based on disability. If two

people apply for a data entry position for which both speed and accuracy are required, the employer may hire the person with the higher speed and level of accuracy, because he or she is the most qualified.

Myth: The ADA gives job applicants with disabilities advantages over job applicants without disabilities.

Fact: The ADA does not give hiring preference to persons with disabilities.

Myth: Under the ADA, employers must give people with disabilities special privileges, known as accommodations.

Fact: Reasonable accommodations are intended to ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities have rights in employment equal — not superior — to those of individuals without disabilities. A reasonable accommodation is a modification to a job, work environment or the way work is performed that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform the essential functions of the job, and enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace.

Myth: Providing accommodations for people with disabilities is expensive.

Fact: The majority of workers with disabilities do not need accommodations to perform their jobs, and for those who do, the cost is usually minimal. According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a service from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, 57% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$500. Moreover, tax incentives are available to help

employers cover the costs of accommodations, as well as modifications required to make their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities.

Myth: The ADA places a financial burden on small businesses that cannot afford to make accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

Fact: Businesses with fewer than 15 employees are not covered by the employment provisions of the ADA. Moreover, a covered employer does not have to provide a reasonable accommodation that would cause an "undue hardship." Undue hardship is defined as an action requiring significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of factors such as an organization's size, financial resources and the nature and structure of its operation.

Myth: ADA lawsuits are flooding the courts.

Fact: The majority of ADA employment-related disputes are resolved through informal negotiation or mediation. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which enforces the ADA's employment provisions, carefully investigates the merits of each case and offers many alternatives to litigation as a way to resolve any potential problem. The number of ADA employment-related cases, whether filed privately or by the EEOC, represents a tiny percentage of the millions of employers in the U.S.

Myth: The ADA is frequently misused by

people with vague complaints or diagnoses.

Fact: If an individual files a complaint of discriminatory treatment, denial of accommodation or harassment under the ADA and does not have a condition that meets its definition of disability, the complaint is dismissed. While claims by people with false or minor conditions may get considerable media attention, the reality is that these complaints are usually dismissed.

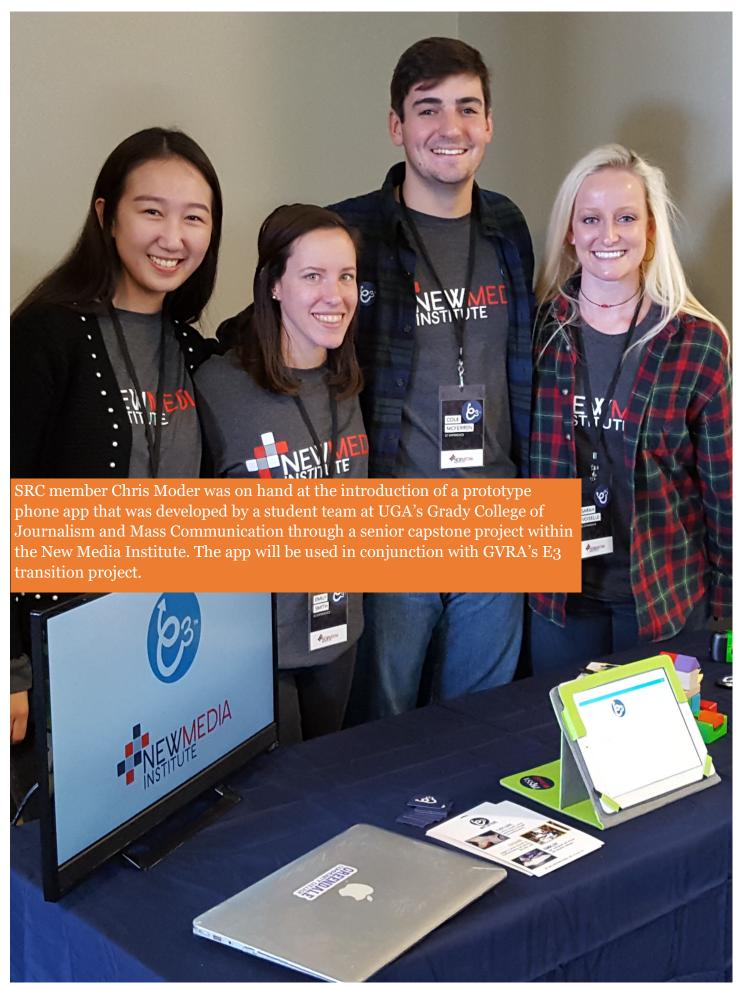
Myth: The ADA protects employees who have difficult or rude personalities or are troublemakers.

Fact: Improper behavior in and of itself does not constitute a disability, and having a disability does not excuse employees from performing essential job tasks and following the same conduct standards required of all employees. The courts have consistently ruled that "common sense" conduct standards, such as getting along with co-workers and listening to supervisors, are legitimate job requirements that employers can enforce equally among all employees.

Myth: Under the ADA, an employer cannot fire an employee who has a disability.

Fact: Employers can fire workers with disabilities under three conditions: The termination is unrelated to the disability or the employee does not meet legitimate requirements for the job, such as performance or production standards, with or without a reasonable accommodation or because of the employee's disability, he or she poses a direct threat to health or safety in the workplace.





Hearing from the Customers UGA Recently Completed Customer Satisfaction Surveys

In partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), the Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD) located at the University of Georgia surveyed current and former consumers of Georgia's state Vocational Rehabilitation Program to measure their satisfaction with the VR agency's service delivery and outcomes.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys for closed and open statuses were developed using Qualtrics, an online survey platform, as well as in Microsoft Word. Measures were taken to ensure all survey versions were accessible and readable at the tenth or lower grade level. Over 4800 individuals were randomly selected from a stratified data sample to participate, 4681 by email and 150 by mail. All survey messaging and documentation included a dedicated email address and phone number for consumers to use for questions or accommodation requests.

Using a 4-point Likert-style scale consumers were asked to rate their level of satisfaction or agreement relative to their overall experience, the services they received, their interaction with GVRA staff, and with their outcome.

The following report contains a detailed description of the survey methodology, analysis and the subsequent recommendations, stemming from the 275 responses received (7.28% response rate with 1.46% margin of error).

Areas of strength perceived by GVRA consumers: (Source: University of Georgia)

* Close to 80% of the consumers felt they were/are treated with respect, sensitivity and politeness.

- * Over 70% of consumers surveyed felt their VR Counselor wanted them to succeed.
- * Over 80% of the consumers expressed satisfaction with the location of their appointments.
- * Over 90% of the consumers surveyed expressed satisfaction with their ability to communicate in their preferred language or mode of communication.
- * Close to 80% of those with open cases agree that the assessments and services they received were necessary.
- * Approximately 80% of consumers who successfully achieved an employment outcome expressed overall satisfaction with GVRA services.
- * Close to 80% of consumers who successfully achieved an employment outcome felt they were better off financially than before receiving services through GVRA.
- * Approximately 75% of consumers who successfully achieved an employment outcome felt the assistance they received from GVRA improved their quality of life.
- * Approximately 75% of the consumers who successfully achieved an employment outcome continue to be employed in the same job they had when their VR case was closed.

Areas in need of improvement as perceived by GVRA consumers: (Source: University of Georgia)

- * Approximately 46% of survey participants expressed dissatisfaction with the information they received, explanations, ability to provide input or freely choose their vocational goal.
- * Approximately 50% of all closed cases in SFY16 were closed either unsuccessfully or

before a work plan was developed. As noted in the survey responses and comments, consumers report lack of communication with their VR Counselor as the primary reason they stopped receiving services.

- * Close to 40% of consumers in open cases (Status 10 and Status 20) report they were dissatisfied with the timeliness of completing assessments or services through GVRA or contracted provider.
- * Over 30% of the consumers who indicated they had not maintained the job they were in at closure stated the job lasted last three months or less. Reasons for the job ending included the job being temporary or seasonal.
- * Among those who achieved a successful employment outcome, 49% of the consumers stated they were ones to identify the job opportunity.
- * Approximately 43% of the survey participants indicated that they are/were receiving SSI or SSDI benefits at application or while receiving VR services. Close to half of those individuals indicated that they had not received benefit counseling or spoken with someone about how work may impact their benefits.
- * Approximately 50% of all survey respondents lacked confidence in their VR Counselor's ability to assist them.
- * Approximately 40% of consumers in open cases (Status 10 and Status 20) feel their VR Counselor lacks knowledge regarding how their specific disability impacts employment.

Findings from this Customer Satisfaction Survey suggest:

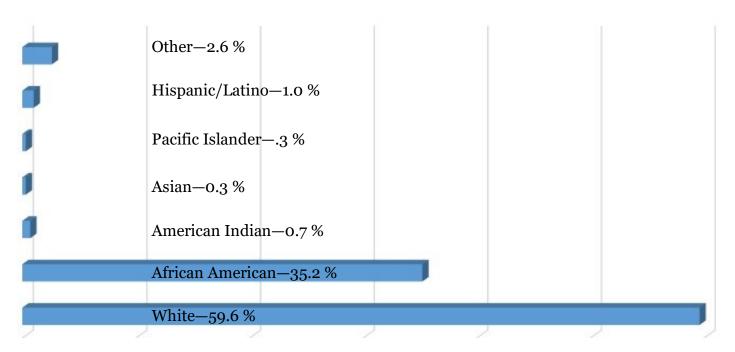
- * Potential measures be put in place to improve overall communication between the consumer and their VR Counselor, as well as measures to improve the quality of information or explanations provided to consumers.
- * VR Counselors and other staff turn over has potentially had a negative impact on consumer engagement. This warrants the identification and development of procedures that would proactively minimize the impact of staff changes.
- * These findings and others previously reported suggest measures might be considered to identify both the barriers and factors need to support a more responsive, urgent approach to service delivery.
- * Measures might to be taken to assure consumers that VR Counselors and other GVRA staff have the competencies and ability to assist them in achieving quality employment outcomes.
- * The possibility of refining the method in which job development/placement is provided, as well as the process of following up once employment occurs. Findings also suggest measures might be taken to emphasize the quality of the employment outcomes, particularly among consumers with complex needs.

Figure 7

Status	Number Disseminated	Bounced or	Final Number of Invitations for Participation	Number Responded	Response Rate
08	568	63	505	24	4.75%
26	1,098 by Email 92 Mailed	173	1,017	65	6.39%
28	710 by email 60 by mail	126	644	41	6.21%
30	971	131	840	36	4.28%
Total	3,499	493	3,006	166	5.52%

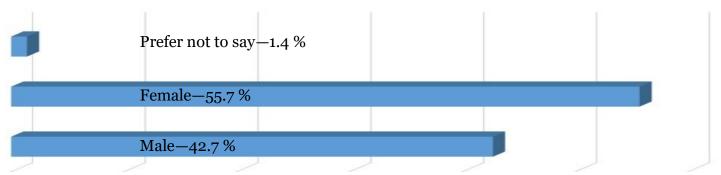
Ethnicity and Race of Participants

Figure 8



Gender of Participants

Figure 9



Age Range of Participants

Figure 10

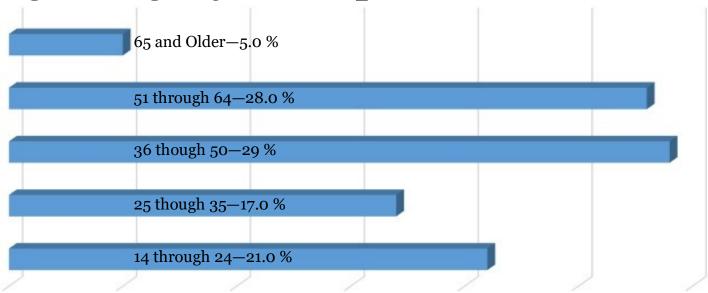
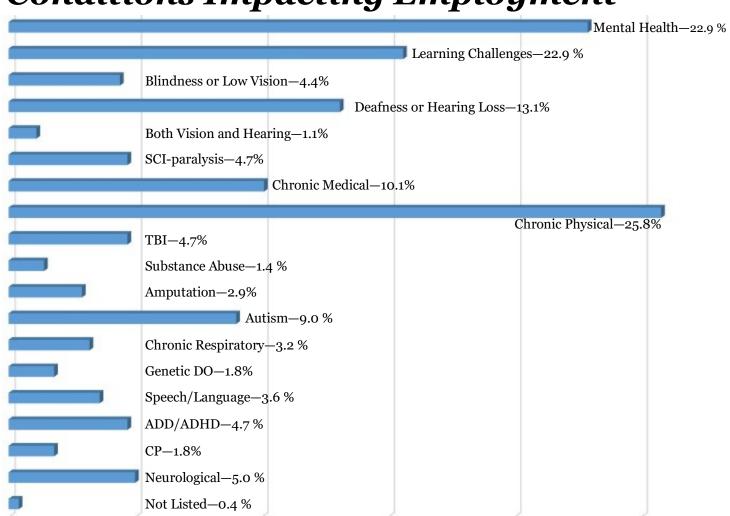
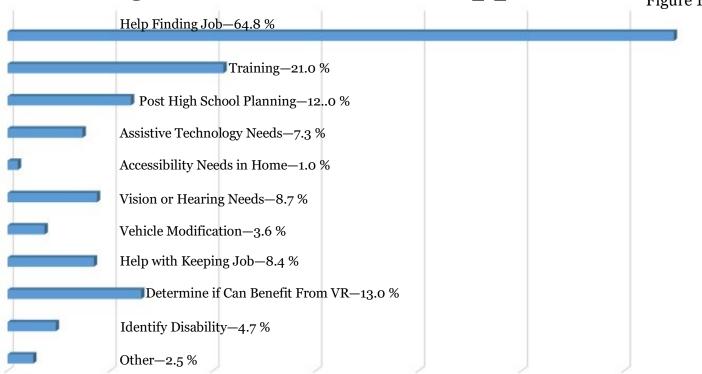




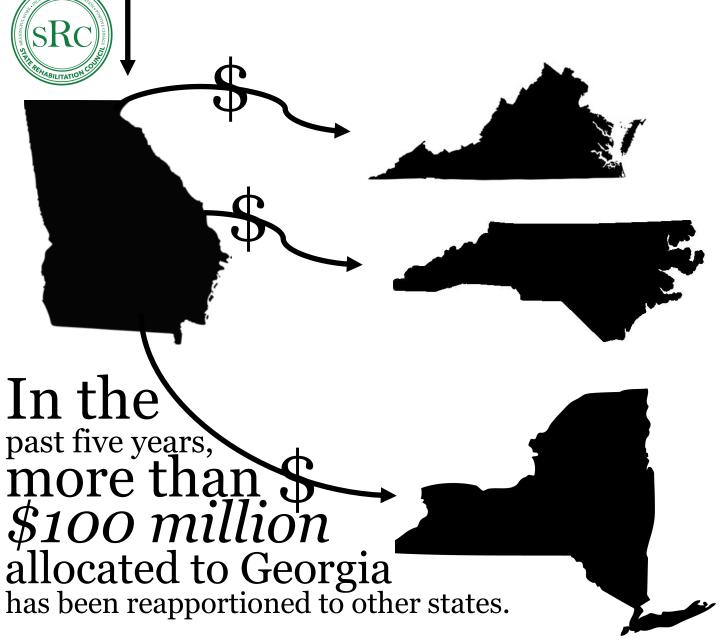
Figure 11



Primary Reason Services Applied For









We want to hear from you.

Call: (404) 232-1998

Write:

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Floor | Atlanta, GA 30334

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